

# C.AL.M. – COPING, ALEXITHYMIA AND MINDFULNESS: AN INNOVATIVE USER-FRIENDLY PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION FOR MS

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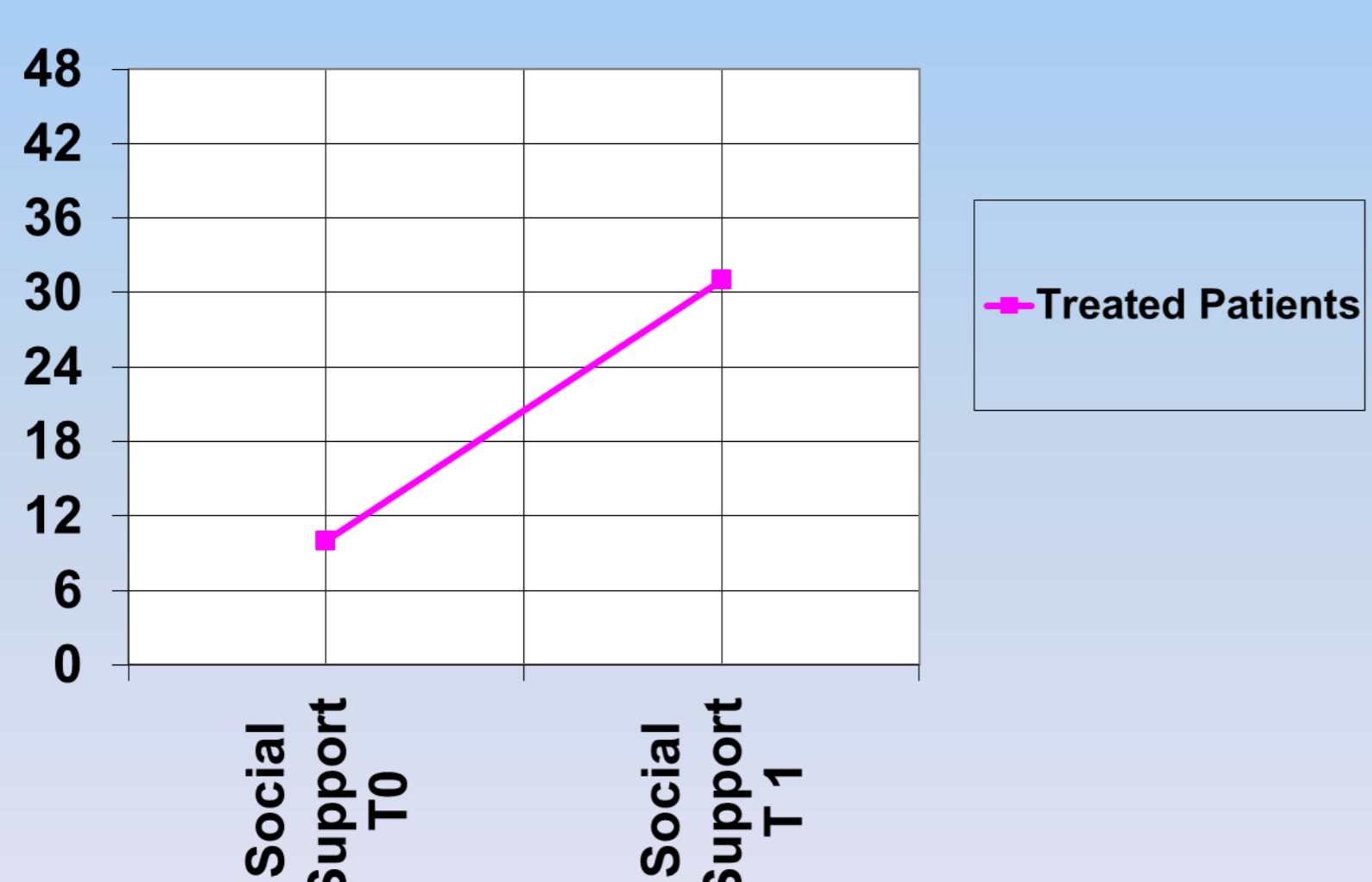
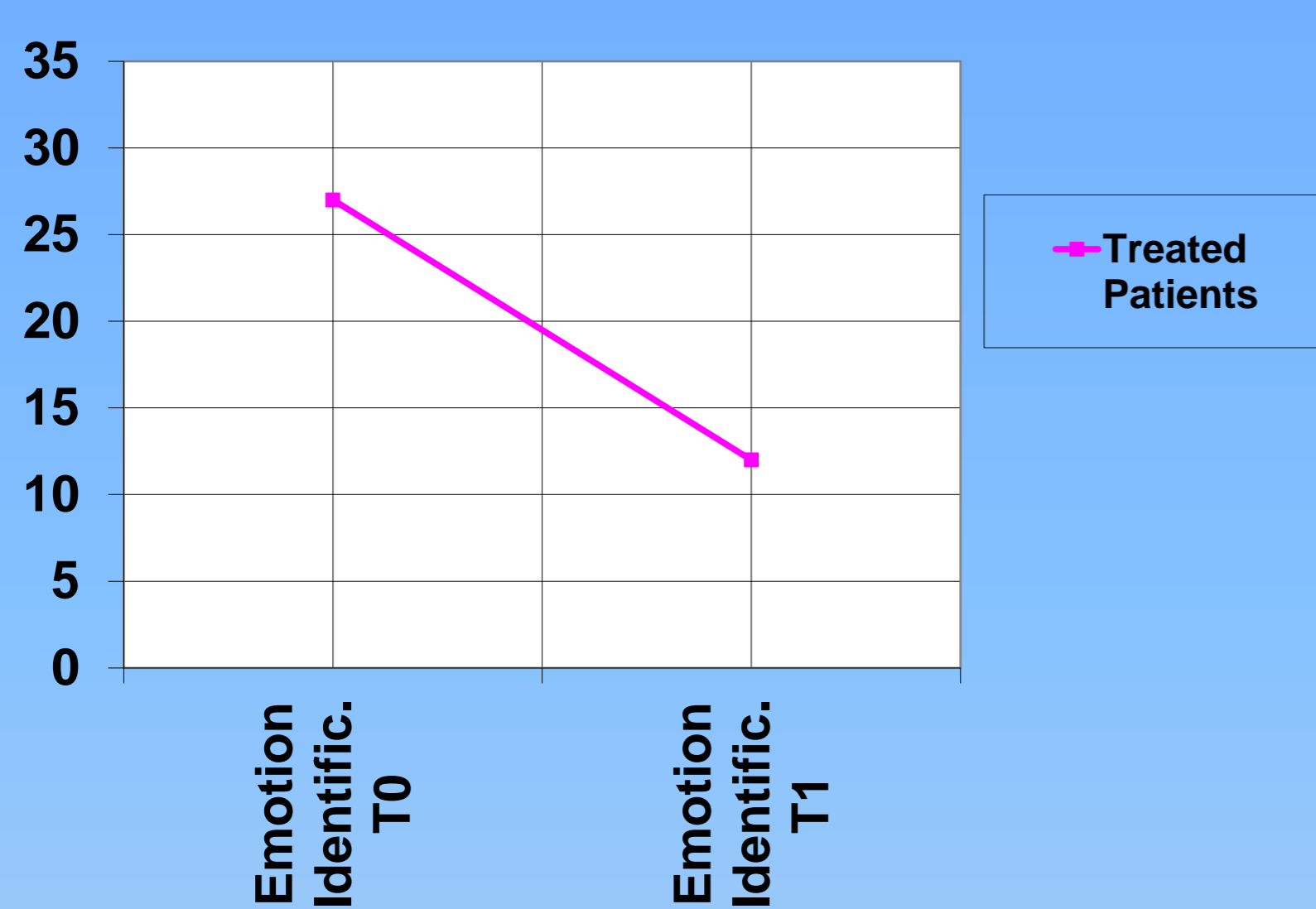
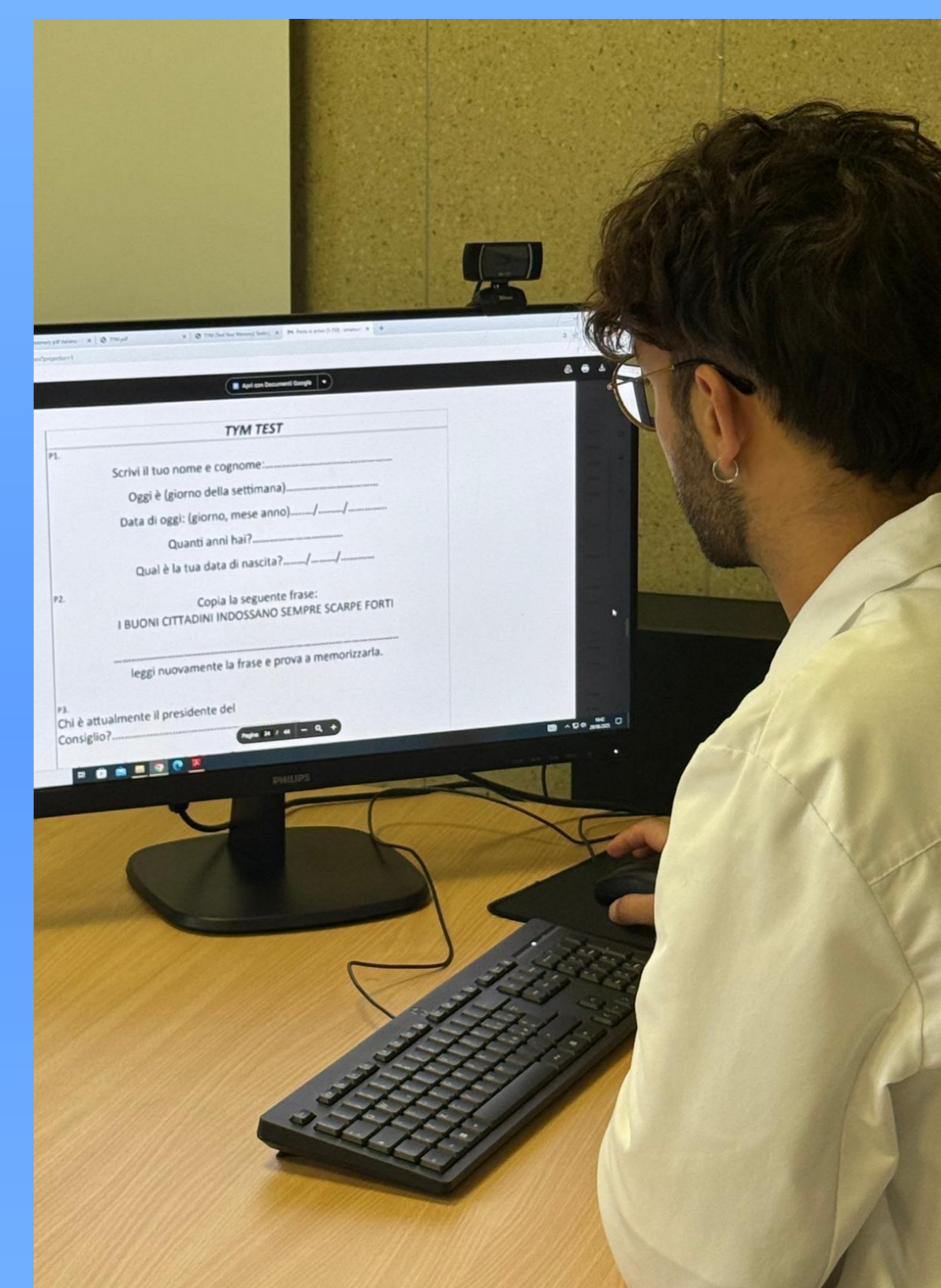
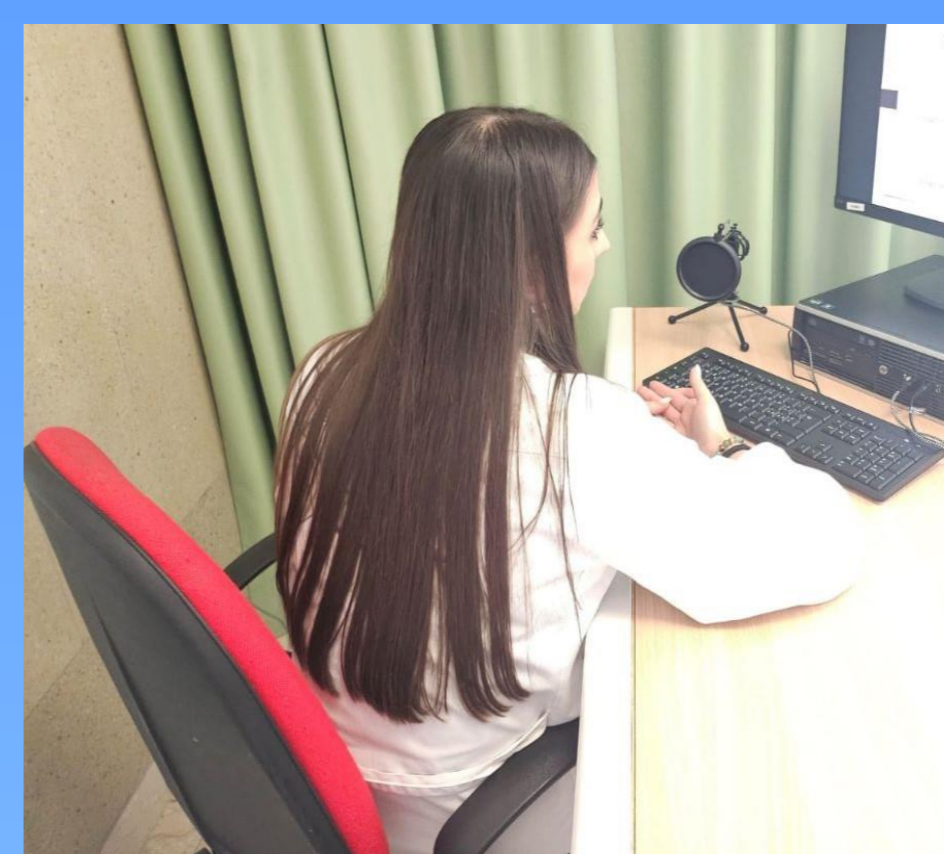
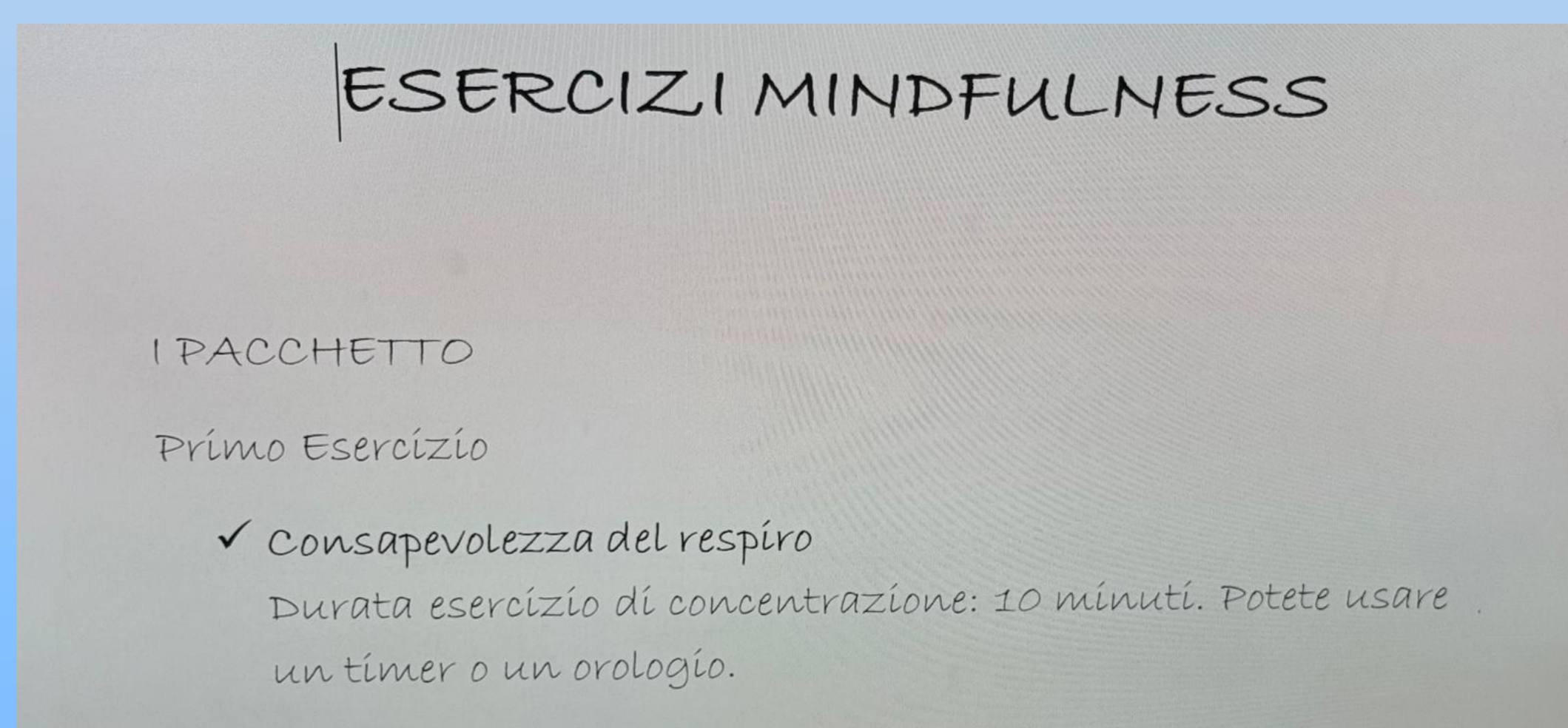
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**Introduction:** Difficulties in coping strategies and in internal elaboration of emotions are commonly referred and disabling in multiple sclerosis (MS). Although there is now good evidence that Mindfulness can be helpful for these disturbances, most healthcare providers are unaware of these treatment options and there are still no universally approved approaches for it.

**Objective:** to investigate the efficacy of Mindfulness for coping strategies and internal elaboration of emotions in patients affected by MS.

**Materials e methods:** 30 patients affected by RR MS with EDSS <4 (20F, 10M; age 38,3±7,5; duration of disease 6,6±3,2) underwent a three months Mindfulness program that we have created in our Center. This program provides Mindfulness exercises through the periodic sending (once every 15 days) by email to carry out emotional strengthening. The exercises can be easily approached autonomously. A professional psychoeducational counseling was also provided by a dedicated professional psychologist. One week before the beginning of the program and one after the end of it patients were evaluated with an original behavioral neuropsychological tests battery including Toronto Alexithymia Scale – 20 (TAS-20) and Coping Orientation to the Problems Experienced- New Italian version (COPE-NVI).



**Results:** 10 patients resulted to be Alexithymic, 20 patients resulted to have dysfunctional coping strategies. All the patients improved their performances in at least one behavioral sub-scale. The neuropsychological domains mostly involved by the improvement were Emotion Identification in TAS-20 and Social Support in COPE-NVI ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Discussion and conclusions:** Mindfulness demonstrated to have positive effects on coping and elaboration of emotions in patients affected by RR MS. If further research will confirm these data, Mindfulness could become a precious resource for the management of a disease in which non-pharmacological approaches are often neglected.

Figure 1-2: Results for TAS-20 Emotion Identification and COPE-NVI Social Support